

Tarantulas Scary but Harmless

By Joseph Parish



When I resided in New Mexico, it was an unusual pet paradise. Some of my fellow servicemen owned snakes, scorpions and all manner of unusual and non-topical creatures, which they beckoned as pets. Where I worked was at the far end of the Air Force Base, and we had created a community pet tank. In this tank was a scorpion, several black widows, assorted bugs and insects along with numerous tarantulas. All those assigned to this out of the way location would take turns offering food for the diverse creatures living in the old fish tank. We created a wire lid and attached it atop the aquarium tank, to ensure that our guests inside – stayed inside. I never misjudged the ingenuity of the tarantula to achieve a successful breakout, as they are proven to be excellent escape artists.

Since these types of creatures were plentiful in New Mexico, many of us had our own selected pets within our homes. My distinct homebased pet was a stunning, fuzzy-looking exotic tarantula. Although this arachnid is usually kind of shy, she would on occasion leisurely and meticulously stride up and down my arm when released from her cage. The spider had an inclination to get stressed very easily, therefore I had to be exceedingly cautious when handling her. Not once did she ever endeavor to cause me any harm, or to bite me. She was fundamentally a gigantic, mild mannered, hairy, poisonous, creature, that is, unless you distressed her, and she became nervous. I never felt the necessity of naming my pet tarantula so it endured its lifetime in the confines of her cage without ever knowing her name.

About two years previously, I had assisted in establishing our work site animal tank. Nothing special was accomplished for this tank, other than taking precautions to create the top cover so as to

prevent the animals from escaping. Spiders like the tarantula, are very commonplace in New Mexico, thus it was of no surprise to me when I arrived home one evening and encountered one of these beauties in my house. I was used to witnessing an occasional common, frivolous house spider, but this was the first time such a big boy like this tarantula ever appeared in my home. I was cleaning out some of the extra boxes which I had hoarded over the years, which only took up valuable space when this three-inch-long hairy spider slowly crawling out from between several of the boxes. As I was delicately collecting the spider, I could only assign her to a small shoe box, until such time as I was able to formulate a proper tank for her. At that moment a friend from work arrived to share a few beers and discuss the events of the day at work. Upon attempting to view the tarantula in its box crawling around on its ten-inch legs, he immediately looked into the box for the spider, not seeing it he went into shock and instantly shrieked in horror. My new pet had escaped or so it seemed. When I carefully examined the shoe box, I discovered the cute little lady hiding on the bottom of the lid. She had not escaped at all. After constructing her home in a five-gallon fish tank my friend felt safer when he was visiting.

Since my dear spider is a loner by nature, and appeared mostly at night, I supplied her with plenty of concealed crevices in her tank for which to hide during the daytime along with ensuring that all her tank was positioned away from any windows to avoid the sunshine.

The longer I owned my Tarantula, the more enchanting and fascinating I found her to be. Spiders in general possess some untimely living statistics. As an example, the poor males of the species generally live a much shorter spans of time than do its female companions. The black widow female will eat its mate after they fertilize her eggs. The female tarantulas are not as evil minded as that with the males of the species, however, never-the-less males survive only a couple of years at best, whereas the female will be around for a good twenty-five years or more.

My spider, was actually a maintenance free creature, requiring little in the way of attention. All I needed to do was provide it with a dozen live crickets every couple of weeks. I also kept a continuous supply of fresh water in a shallow dish or bowl. The spiders heat requirements were met by the same standards as my own – 72 degrees, so there was no issue with that.

Owning a spider such as this fine lady, I came to understand that there is a host of different breeds such as Chilean Rose, Mexican Red-knee, Costa Rican Zebra, Mexican Redleg, and the Desert Blonde. My pet spider was a female Desert Blonde, a common tarantula in the southwestern states. I enjoyed raising my tarantula and unfortunately when it was time to move on to another assignment my pet was awarded to another kind person to love and to cherish.